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DAKAR PLS PASS ODC, DAO, AND RAO

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TAGS: [PINR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SG](#) [GA](#)
SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: INFLUENCE OF SENEGALESE ENERGY
MINISTER

REF: A. BANJUL 283 AND PREVIOUS
[1](#)B. DAKAR 1144 (ALL NOTAL)

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOSEPH STAFFORD, REASON 1.4 (B AND D)

GOS ENERGY MINISTER'S INFLUENCE ON GAMBIAN POLICY

[1](#)2. (C) In a recent conversation with Ambassador, a long-time Embassy contact with high-level GOTG contacts raised the Senegalese/Gambian relationship, asserting that Senegalese Energy Minister Samuel Sarr was a notably influential figure in GOS policy toward The Gambia. Our source claimed to know Sarr well and said the latter's mother was Gambian. He recounted that, following the 1994 coup that brought President Yayha Jammeh to power, Sarr, then resident in Paris and running a consulting firm, assisted the military regime in obtaining economic assistance from the GOF. According to our source, Sarr was instrumental in the Gambians securing French assistance in upgrading The Gambia's water and electrical systems and in establishing a national television service. However, our source stated, Sarr and President Jammeh ended up falling out after problems arose in the French-supported utilities sector here, so that Sarr at present "cannot be considered a friend of Jammeh" in the GOS. As an example of what our source termed Sarr's unhelpfulness toward the GOTG, he asserted that Sarr had successfully lobbied Kuwaiti business magnate Mohamed Al-Kharafi to limit his investment projects in The Gambia and give priority to Senegal instead.

COMMENT

3.(C) We defer to Embassy Dakar regarding Sarr's role and influence in GOS policymaking, regarding The Gambia or otherwise. Nonetheless, we found our source's remarks noteworthy amidst the heightened Senegalese/Gambian tensions at present (refs a and b). Our source portrayed Sarr as among GOS officials less inclined to be tolerant over Jammeh's provocative behavior in past months, e.g., on the Casamance dossier (ref a). As for our source's claim of Sarr luring Al-Kharafi to Senegal and away from The Gambia, our sense is that while Al-Kharafi has reduced somewhat his profile here over the past year or so, he nonetheless remains a key player in the Gambian business community, as underscored by the recent inauguration near Banjul of an Al-Kharafi-owned Sheraton hotel built by his local construction firm. END
COMMENT.
STAFFORD